



Adult Grief Booklet

+ 10 Day Reflection Guide

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Introduction

Be proud of yourself for taking a step to see how you can move forward your healing journey. This booklet was created to reach MORE people where they are...at their own pace, in hopes of healing and growing.

Grief is not something to get over, or something that needs fixing, but with the right tools it can make your healing journey healthier and more meaningful.

At Hope's House we noticed a common theme of adults putting all their time and effort into getting the kids any help they need, but they were putting their own needs on the back burner. This can result in delayed grief healing. In a national study done by the National Alliance for Grieving Children, 20% of the families polled had a parent that was not getting grief help for themselves. This resulted in kids having:

1. Higher levels of anxiety.
2. Some behavior issues acting out in the home
3. Lower self-esteem.

This is why it is important to take time to take care of yourself and to work on your own grief journey.

These booklets are published monthly to keep grief healing at the top of mind. This includes new articles and content each month, as well as a NEW 10 Reflection guide every month. I hope you find value in these booklets, and would love your feedback. If you would like to look back at past months booklets visit www.hopeshousewi.com for a free download.

If you are having a tough time this holiday season look back at our November booklet. There is a section on grief and the holidays.

What you can expect from this booklet:

Real talk from people who have gone through a tough loss.

No SHOULDs (you should do this...)

Sending healing thoughts your way,

Gina Peotter

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Who Are You Outside Of Your Grief

“Healing doesn’t mean the damage never existed. It means the damage no longer controls our lives.” -Akshay Dubey

Grief is a journey each of us take on our own time, in our own way. In the midst of working through emotions of the death of a loved one, we can forget what brings us joy. Death can be a consuming event in a person’s life. Some people who have gone through a death lose sight of themselves, and who they really are. It definitely is easy to do when you are trying to get through each day without blowing up, or breaking down. Allow yourself to take some time today to think through these questions below. My hope for you is you are able to take a step back from your grief and really dig into YOU, who you once were, who you are and who you want to be again.

What makes your inner child light up? Think back to what you loved to do as a kid, or you were doing when you were the happiest when you were younger.

What do you really care about? Think about the people or relationships in your life, what in your life would you drop anything for?

What lights you up? Think back to when you remember smiling so big or really enjoying yourself. Besides a million dollars what would make you jump up for joy today?

What are your values? This is different for every person, but think back to your morals and how you were raised- is it family, working hard, peace, adventure, spirituality, achievement...

Do your answers line up with how you are living today? If not, reflect on some baby steps you could take to align yourself with your core values or do something this week that will light you up and bring you joy. Sometimes it is taking away things like saying no to things that are draining you or bringing you down. On the flip side it could be saying yes to something you have been putting off for a long time. Or taking the feeling of guilt away to allow yourself some downtime or relaxation.

What my hope for you is to take a step back from your current grief to realize that it may consume you at times, but you are bigger than the grief. You are still in there, and grief is a piece of your life now, not your whole life.

Action Item: Listen to a different radio station or music this week, maybe something from the genre of your childhood, or a time when you felt joy.

Secondary Loss

People often know what they are going through before they have a name for it. A secondary loss is another layer most people are grieving and don't even know it. This can be more than one thing. Take a look at the different areas of your life that were affected by the death of your loved one. Think through what changed in your life (besides everything)... if you get specific about it you will start to see some of the secondary losses you experienced and are probably dealing with now without realizing. Some common secondary losses are:

Loss of identity: Did a title or relationship change? If your only child died some might think they lost the title of mom, and are not considered a mom anymore. Or if your spouse died, you are considered a widow and not married status anymore, or some may say you are considered not married anymore, but still feel married to your spouse. This is common in non-death situations too- people who get let go from jobs usually come across this loss of identity. Their job title is what they attributed success or their identity to, and now are unemployed.

Loss of income/financial stability: This is often seen when a spouse dies, or when someone unexpectedly loses a job. Losing a contributing income is a hard pill to swallow for some. It causes a lot of people to panic and added stress. Some might see it as just another thing they have to figure out, but the reality is that they can be grieving this secondary loss as a result of the person who died.

Loss of family structure: This can tie into the loss of identity, but is a stand alone secondary loss. If you have heard the quote about a limb on the family tree has fallen, that is what it is like for a lot of people. Your family as it once was is no longer the same. That is huge. Your family structure has changed forever, and that is big. It is something people have to learn

Loss of something tangible: This could be something like selling a parents house after they die, or a car/boat/4 wheeler/snowmobile being totaled in an accident. After my mom died we put my childhood home up for sale. This put me through so many emotions all over the map. Cleaning out the house, getting rid of those memories and eventually never being able to walk back into "my home" was super challenging for me. This was all in the midst of the recent loss of my mom- my last parent that was alive. At the time I didn't realize I was actually grieving the loss of my childhood home.

Loss of future dreams: This usually comes up when it is an infant death, child loss or even spouse loss. Basically the loss of what you thought your (and the persons) future would be like. This means a person had plans, ideas and dreams of what life was going to be like... and the reality is completely different without the person.

Visit YouTube and search "Coping with Secondary Loss" the video was added on May 1, 2020. In this video they talk about how you can turn secondary losses into secondary gains.

Action Item: Think through your loss(s) and name any secondary losses you had. How did you handle them- or is there opportunity for you somewhere with the secondary loss?

Read more articles about secondary loss

Articles on Secondary Loss:

<https://whatsyourgrief.com/a-deep-dive-into-secondary-loss/>

<https://whatsyourgrief.com/secondary-loss-one-loss-isnt-enough/>

<https://www.midlandcareconnection.org/grief-beyond-grief-the-secondary-losses-associated-with-grief/>

<https://www.taps.org/articles/19-1/secondaryloss>

Podcasts on Secondary Loss:

[Podcast on Secondary Loss](#)

[Unplug Grief Podcast on Secondary Loss](#)

Loss of Identity article:

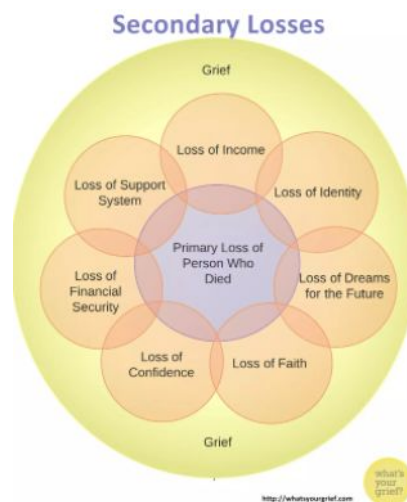
<https://whatsyourgrief.com/dont-know-anymore-grief-loss-identity/>

Video about Secondary Loss:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pXyzsqSNVEw>

Video about Secondary Loss- Suicide Widows:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2U0S3i9ZutQ>



10 Day Reflection Guide- New Death

You can use these anyway you would like. Read them all at once and ponder the questions. Or you can take a few minutes each day to go through one. Another idea would be to read them together with someone else, and share your thoughts. These can also be used as journaling prompts, get out a journal, notebook, paper or computer and write out your thoughts... see where they may take you. This is designed to work anyway you want it to. The goal is to be true to yourself.

Day 1: *"It occurred to me that grief is like a tunnel. You enter it without a choice because you must get to the other side. The darkness of it plays tricks on you and sometimes you can even forget where you are or what your purpose is. I believe that people, now and again, get lost or stuck in that tunnel..." - Loretta Nyhan, Empire Girls*

Are you worried that you won't find your way out of the tunnel of grief? There is always a light to follow. With time and effort, you may work your way to find the other side. If you are struggling, you may need to seek out a support group or a trusted friend to help you see that light. The key right now is to know that you can absolutely find a way out.

👉Q: What do you keep running into over and over? Is it a typical emotion- fear, sadness, guilt...

Day 2: *"Yet that grief and this joy were alike outside all the ordinary conditions of life; they were loop-holes, as it were, in that ordinary life through which there came glimpses of something sublime. And in the contemplation of this sublime something the soul was exalted to inconceivable heights of which it had before had no conception which reason lagged behind, unable to keep up with it." - Leo Tolstoy, Anna Karenina*

Grief and joy are the extremes of emotion. Although we think we seek joy, that is actually just a fleeting feeling. What you miss most right now is contentment, the feeling that all is calm and well. You may not be able to achieve that right now. Grief, the other extreme, is a forceful presence in your life. Although it may take a few weeks or months, contentment will return, and it will feel far sweeter for having lost it.

👉Q: Where are you right now on the emotional scale of grief and joy?

Day 3: *"I picture Cully tromping through that high, deep snow. That's how I feel physically from all of this. Moving through grief like it's a thick drift, exhausting but enlivening. It makes your muscles ache. It makes you feel you've inhabited your body completely." - Kauai Hart Hemmings, The Possibilities*

Grief can truly feel like an endless winter. Like the actual season in colder climates, however, the sun will eventually melt the snow and the beauty of spring will be revealed. Try to have hope today that the spring in your heart will come again as well.

👉Q: Is there a reminder you can give yourself that things can get better? A quote on your phone, a hope keychain or bracelet...

Day 4: *"People grieve in different ways, some silently, some in anger, some in spite. Rarely does grief bring out the best in people, despite what local historians like to tell you."* - Joanne Harris, *Five Quarters of the Orange*

You may miss the "real you", that person you were before you started to grieve. Don't worry...that person is still there. You will return to a more caring, compassionate version of yourself on the other end of the grief process.

👉Q: Do you see your grief as a journey or are you looking at it trying to get to the end so you can move on?

Day 5: *"There is greater clarity in the still waters of sadness, something not found in the babbling brooks of more sought after emotions."* - Shaun Hick

Feeling sad can be your new normal. That emotion has permeated every part of your life for weeks such that you almost don't have to be reflective and consider how you are feeling. The emotion is always sadness.

Take a break from sadness today. Put your face in the sun for ten minutes or go for a walk in a local park. Take a step away from feeling down. You'll be glad you did.

👉Q: What can you do today that you have not done in a long time?

Day 6: *"We live and we die, but we are made of sterner stuff. The carbon atoms in our fingernails, the calcium in our bones, the iron atoms in our blood -- all the countless trillions of atoms of which we are made -- are ancient objects. They existed before us, before the Earth itself, in fact. And after each of us dies, they will depart from our bodies and do other things. Forever."*

- Keith Heyer Meldahl, *Hard Road West: History and Geology along the Gold Rush Trail*

Physical bodies are of this earth; you learned about their components in school. Somehow death does not seem as grounded. Your loss is forcing you to face what you think happened to the essence or the spirit of your loved one. This experience is actually compelling you to look at not only your religious or cultural beliefs, but what you personally believe now that you've experienced loss. This process is as much spiritual as it is emotional.

👉Q: What surprised you most about yourself after the loss?

Day 7: *"I think validation is one of the most beautiful gifts we can give the grieving."* - Angie Cartwright

When the opportunity arises, write a note or take the time to call someone who has experienced a loss. Be a real listener when they want to talk, and be a shoulder to cry on when they need to weep. Providing comfort to someone else will help heal your heart as well.

👉Q: Who can you reach out to this week? Send a text, give them a call, send them a card, or flowers... flowers or the card can be anonymous if you don't want to reveal yourself.

Day 8: *"The sunlight now lay over the valley perfectly still. I went over to the graveyard beside the church and found them under the old cedars... I am finding it a little hard to say that I felt them resting there, but I did. I felt their completeness as whatever they had been in the world.*

I knew I had come there out of kindness, theirs and mine. The grief that came to me then was nothing like the grief I had felt for myself alone... This grief had something in it of generosity, some nearness to joy. In a strange way it added to me what I had lost. I saw that, for me, this country would always be populated with presences and absences, presences of absences, the living and the dead. The world as it is would always be a reminder of the world that was, and of the world that is to come." - Wendell Berry, Jayber Crow

Find an old, tall tree near your home. It might be in a city park or down a country lane. Look up into its branches. Start to think about what this tree has seen - the generations that have taken shelter under it from the sun, the children who have tried to climb it. Life rushes by, but this tree can symbolize for you generations of people who have been here, lived and loved, and moved on. Your loss is part of what this tree has seen, and like the new leaves in spring, you will eventually grow forward from this sorrow.

👉Q: How many generations of friends/family members has your loved one touched?

Day 9: *"But grief is the ultimate unrequited love. However hard and long we love someone who has died, they can never love us back. At least that is how it feels..." - Rosamund Lupton, Sister*

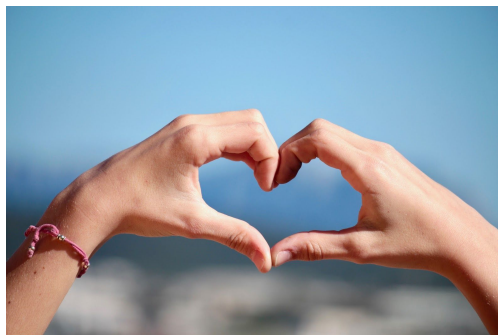
You will always love the person you lost. Grieving can feel lonely because you don't get to feel their love in return. You may want to write down what you would like to say to your loved one and what you think they would say back to you.

👉Q: Take time to ask them some questions... what do you think they would say back to you?

Day 10: *"But grief is a walk alone. Others can be there, and listen. But you will walk alone down your own path, at your own pace, with your sheared-off pain, your raw wounds, your denial, anger, and bitter loss. You'll come to your own peace, hopefully, but it will be on your own, in your own time." - Cathy Lamb, The First Day of the Rest of My Life*

Think of how you grew to care for or even love the person you lost. It was its own beautiful experience. Grieving is as unique as the love you shared with the special person you lost.

👉Q: What made your love unique for that person? Or What made your loss unique?



10 Days of Reflection- 1 Year+

This section is intended for anyone over the year mark after a death. Not saying there is a time limit on grief, but most lives look a bit different days after a death vs a year or more out.

You can use these anyway you would like. Read them all at once and ponder the questions. Or you can take a few minutes each day to go through one. Another idea would be to read them together with someone else, and share your thoughts. These can also be used as journaling prompts, get out a journal, notebook, paper or computer and write out your thoughts... see where they may take you. This is designed to work anyway you want it to. The goal is to be true to yourself.

Day 1: *“I used to think grief was a feeling and something you purely dealt with in your mind, oh how wrong I was! It is a process that involves your heart, mind, body and soul. Every part of you grieves, every cell weeps. If we use our energy to fight experiencing it we have less strength available to us to bravely face it. So lay down your sword and take off your armour. Just feel it, let it take hold, and then the walk of healing will be gifted to you.” - Zoe Clark-Coates*

Some people avoid talking about the person who died. Others change the channel when a sad commercial comes on to avoid tears. People even change the radio station when a triggering song comes on to avoid those feelings. It is human nature to shield ourselves from sadness or intense emotions.

👉Q: HONESTLY, What have you been avoiding?

Day 2: *“One of the most challenging things I’ve had to learn is that healing must be intentional. There is no one golden day that comes and saves you from all your misery. Healing is a practice. You have to decide that it’s what you want to do and actively do it. You have to make a habit out of it. Once I learned that, I only looked back to see how far I came. “ -The Minds Journal*

This goes back to the saying that you are in charge of your life. Are you sitting around waiting for someone to rescue you from your life? The only way to make a change is to make a choice.

👉Q: What can you do this week to do something for you in your grief journey?

Day 3: *“She was always fighting a battle, but her smile would never tell you so.” -Nikki Rowe*

Sometimes the strongest people carry grief inside and never let anyone know what is really going on inside. If this is you know that you are not alone. If you know someone who is strong who lost a person, reach out to them.

👉Q: What can you do this week to let your guard down a bit? Reach out to someone who is the strong willed to let them know you are there for them.

Day 4: *“You’re not stuck. You’re just committed to certain patterns of behavior because they helped you in the past. Now those behaviors have become more harmful than helpful. The reason*

why you can't move forward is because you keep applying an old formula to a new level in your life. Change the formula to get a different result."

Woah! History repeats itself. If you aren't learning from your situations and problems, they will come back around.

👉Q: What was your last big problem and what was the root lesson you should have learned?

Day 5: *"You can't heal if you keep pretending you're not hurt"*.

This goes back to day 3. The strong willed people tend to shelter their feelings. The only way you will move forward in your grieving journey is taking it into your own hands. This might seem obvious by now, but as the days, months and years go on it is harder to see that you might be sheltering feelings and grief.

👉Q: What do you typically do to hide your feelings?

Day 6: *"Your current situation is giving you an opportunity to re-evaluate what you want."*
-Tashabee

People don't often take a step back from life and assess what is really going on. Whatever is going on in your life can be looked at through so many lenses.

👉Q: What would a wise old lady tell you about your current situation?

Day 7: *"What a beautiful thing it is to be able to stand tall and say, 'I fell apart, and I survived'."* - Daily Quotes

So many people are going through something; grief, loss, so many life altering situations. It is easy to forget that we aren't the only ones in the world going through some tough stuff. You made it through the day of the death, you made it through the day of the funeral/burial, you made it through the next few days. You survived the worst days so far, be proud of that!

👉Q: What are you most proud of?

Day 8: *"There are some who bring a light so great to the world that even after they have gone the light remains."* - Love Lives On

That is so true of so many people who have died. Man, I think back to the people who showed up to my parents funerals- so many people. I had no idea who half of the people were. It was amazing to see how many lives they touched. I always think back to the volunteer work my mom did and the lives she touched. With my dad being a teacher, the kids he helped or encouraged. It always inspires me to be better in this world.

👉Q: What do you envy most about the person who died?

Day 9: *"If people knew how much I truly missed you, they would wonder how I am still breathing."* Sandra Heavensbook Angels

Man oh man, love can run so deep. If you haven't been through the death of someone close you won't know what it is like. It is the toughest thing many people go through, and the toughest journey people navigate after a death.

👉Q: How would you describe life after the death to someone in simple terms (or think of how you would describe it to a child)?

Day 10: “‘Grief sucks.’ -Everyone Ever” - *What's Your Grief*

This is my new favorite quote... and 100% true. It is not fun. It is not easy. It is lonely. There is no one to tell you a road map of how to make it better. It stinks... but obviously you know this first hand.

👉Q: How would you end this sentence: “ Grief _____ ”

hope

If you only carry one thing throughout your entire life, let it be hope. Let it be hope that better things are always ahead. Let it be hope that you can get through even the toughest of times. Let it be hope that you are stronger than any challenge that comes your way. Let it be hope that you are exactly where you are meant to be right now, and that you are on the path to where you are meant to be... Because during these times, hope will be the very thing that carries you through.

- Nikki Banas

Guided Journaling Questions

1. How would your family or friends describe you? _____
2. What drains the most energy from you? _____
3. What is your top priority in your life right now? _____
4. How would you describe the season of your life you are in right now?

5. How do you respond when things do not go in your favor?

6. I get angry when _____
7. What brings you joy in life? _____
8. What would the person(s) who died would say about your life today, if they were sitting right next to you? _____
9. What is your biggest fear about the future without the person(s) who died?

10. The last time I cried was _____
11. What secondary loss did you also grieve? _____
12. What is one thing you want to start saying yes to? _____
13. What has been your best decision in the past five years?

14. What is your favorite quote or saying? Why?

15. What did you lean on most after your loved one died? _____

Journal Questions or Talking Points for Kids

These questions can be used to start conversations with kids to dig deeper. Or they can be given to kids as journal prompts to use as their guided journal.

1. What did you do today that was hard?

2. What did you do this week that helped another person or animal?

3. What adult at home do you feel comfortable talking to?

4. What do you do when you are sad when you are alone?

5. When I can't sleep I worry about:

6. A song that reminds me of the person who died is:

7. What is one thing you wish you could have said to the person(s) who died?

8. What are three things that make you happy?

9. If you could go back in time what day would you want to relive?

10. I'm really good at:

Sources

Muehl-Boettcher Funeral home daily emails. You can sign up for those on their website www.muehlboettcher.com

Gina Peotter. Grief Support Specialist, Muehl-Boettcher Funeral Home, Executive Director of Hope's House, January 1- January 18, 2021.

Hope's House- grief support for kids and families email us at info@hopeshousewi.com or connect with us on Facebook.

What's Your Grief- website filled with grief articles and topics for the bereaved. www.whatsyourgrief.com

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